

CINEPLEX

MAGAZINE

Inside
CHRISTIAN
BALE
NATALIE
PORTMAN
JENNIFER
LOPEZ
STEPHAN
JAMES

A VERY

MARY

CHRISTMAS

Emily Blunt
& Lin-Manuel Miranda **TALK**
MARY POPPINS RETURNS

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We can't think of a better choice than **Emily Blunt** to breathe new life into iconic Disney character Mary Poppins in this month's *Mary Poppins Returns*. Here the British star tells us why her version of Mary is "bonkers," and which prop she took home from the set. Plus, we have Blunt's co-star **Lin-Manuel Miranda** on finding his inner child to play Jack the lamplighter
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COVER PHOTO BY JASON BELL





MARY AND BRIGHT

There has been no lack of magic in movies over the past 15 years. From *Harry Potter* and *Fantastic Beasts* to the *Lord of the Rings* and *Hobbit* movies, wands, spells and loud cracks of enchanted lightning have become a staple of the big screen.

But it's been a darker brand of sorcery, hasn't it? Dangerous. Menacing. Lives on the line.

This month, *Mary Poppins Returns* brings back a more innocent kind of magic. The kind of magic that involves flying umbrellas and pretty drawings that spring to life at the touch of Mary's hand. That's refreshing, especially at this time of year.

Yet the bit of magic I love most with *Mary Poppins Returns* isn't something that happens on screen. It's how perfectly the casting of Dick Van Dyke, the only actor returning from the 1960s classic, fit like a puzzle piece into the sequel.

You may not remember that Van Dyke played two characters in 1964's *Mary Poppins*. Of course, he's best known for Bert the chimney sweep, but the second character was Mr. Dawes Sr., the hunched, silver-haired old director of the bank that employed Jane and Michael's father, Mr. Banks. Mr. Dawes Sr., who must have been in his 90s, had a son, Mr. Dawes Jr., who looked a lot like his dad (same strange beard) and seemed to be about 70 at the time.

When 91-year-old Van Dyke agreed to appear in *Mary Poppins Returns*, which takes place 24 years after the original film but was made 54 years later, there was no way he could play Bert, who would be in his 60s, or Dawes Sr., whom we're quite confident would be dead. But at 91 he was the perfect age to play the son, Mr. Dawes Jr. You can see him dancing — yes dancing, at 91 — atop a banker's desk in the film's trailer.

What a bit of magic.

Our deputy editor Ingrid Randoja interviewed **Emily Blunt**, the new Mary, and **Lin-Manuel Miranda**, who plays Jack the lamplighter, a protégé of Van Dyke's Bert, for this month's cover story and Miranda told us, for him, there was something else magical about working with Van Dyke.

The man who changed the face of theatre with his Pulitzer Prize-winning musical *Hamilton* told us that his very first play, back in sixth grade, was *Bye Bye Birdie*. And who starred in the original, 1960 production of *Bye Bye Birdie* and it's 1963 big-screen adaptation? Dick Van Dyke.

"I geeked out," Miranda gushed. "I think we spent most of the day talking about *Bye Bye Birdie*.... I was asking him about [co-star] Chita Rivera, I was asking about eight shows a week, I was asking him about how he did *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. I mean, he filmed *Poppins* on hiatus between seasons of *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and any time I think I'm busy, I go, 'Well, I'm not Dick Van Dyke.'"

Turn to "Making Mary," page 52, for more on *Mary Poppins Returns* from Blunt and Miranda, including why Blunt says getting the role was like a marriage proposal.

Elsewhere in this issue we have **Natalie Portman** on playing *Vox Lux*'s world-weary pop star (page 36), **Christian Bale** describes how he transformed into Dick Cheney for *Vice* (page 42), *Second Act* star **Jennifer Lopez** talks book smarts vs. street smarts (page 46), and we wake up Canadian actor **Stephan James** to discuss his starring role in *If Beale Street Could Talk*, director Barry Jenkins' follow-up to his Best Picture-winning drama, *Moonlight* (page 48).

Plus, on page 22 we come to your rescue with our gorgeous, five-page **Holiday Gift Guide**, stuffed with great ideas for everyone on your list.

Happy Holidays everyone, we'll see you in the new year.

■ MARNI WEISZ, EDITOR

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SNAPS



HATS OFF

Steve Coogan replicates one of Stan Laurel's famous gags before the world premiere of *Stan & Ollie* at the BFI Film Festival in London, England. Coogan plays Laurel to **John C. Reilly**'s Oliver Hardy (background).

PHOTO BY DAVID M. BENETT/GETTY



REFRESHING ENTHUSIASM

The L.A. premiere of *Goosebumps 2: Haunted Halloween* wasn't supposed to be a costume affair, but that didn't stop star **Ken Jeong** and his family.

PHOTO BY PRESLEY ANN/GETTY



GOING GAGA

Bradley Cooper seems absolutely tickled to get a peck on the cheek from his *A Star Is Born* co-star **Lady Gaga** during the film's U.K. premiere in London.

PHOTO BY KARWAI TANG/GETTY

HOME IS CALLING

AQUAMAN

ONLY IN THEATRES
DECEMBER 21

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MEET THE

The film's "Spider people" are, from left: Peni (Kimiko Glenn), Spider-Gwen (Hailee Steinfeld), Spider-Ham (John Mulaney), Miles Morales (Shameik Moore), Peter Parker (Jake Johnson) and Spider-Man Noir (Nicolas Cage)

SPIDER PEOPLE

Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse assembles many different versions of the arachnid-based superhero, from many different universes, that meet up and battle a force threatening all of their realities.

The film's writer, Phil Lord, says what he finds problematic about most superhero stories is they give you the idea that someone is going to come and save you. Not his film.

"A neat thing about having a movie with a bunch of Spider people in it is it democratizes the superhero thing, that it can happen to any of us, everybody in your life might be putting on that mask in the evening," Lord explained during a press day for the film. "I want young people to understand that it's up to them, that

they cannot wait to be chosen and that it's not a birthright. We all have to choose to be heroic in whatever way is unique to us, and that's ultimately what [protagonist Miles Morales] figures out."

Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse hits theatres December 14th. —MW



Woody Harrelson

On Home Turf:

Midway

Woody Harrelson, Mandy Moore, Patrick Wilson, Nick Jonas, Luke Evans and Dennis Quaid have been milling about Montreal for the past couple of months while making *Midway*, director **Roland Emmerich's** re-do of the 1976 Charlton Heston film.

They'll wrap up the film about The Battle of Midway, a critical World War II clash that took place in the North Pacific Ocean in 1942, around the middle of this month.

It's not the first time Emmerich has chosen Montreal for a shoot. He made parts of *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), *White House Down* (2013) and *Stonewall* (2015) here too. —MW

THE ART OF FILM

Chet Phillips began his Matchbox Art Prints series with just eight pieces. He's now up to almost 100. The Austin, Texas, artist says he was inspired by, "the style of vintage ephemera," and he works entirely in the digital realm, so there are no "original" versions of his prints. "Though trained in traditional tools like scratchboard and woodcut, I've worked digitally for more than 25 years," he says, "emulating printmaking styles with Corel's natural media program, Painter." Here, clockwise from top, you see his tiny takes on the Predator, Darth Vader and Napoleon Dynamite. See more at chetart.com. —MW



Spoiler alert.

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Quote Unquote

Sometimes having him around really helped, and sometimes it was annoying. But even when it was annoying that helped too, because there's a lot of frustration in the characters' circumstances. **So whether he was giving me a great note or doing something that triggered me just because he's my dad, it was always something I could use.**

LUCAS HEDGES ON BEING DIRECTED BY HIS FATHER PETER HEDGES FOR *BEN IS BACK*



Steve Carell and Janelle Monáe dolls in *Welcome to Marwen*
BELOW: Mark Hamill's *Star Wars: Battlefront* incarnation

It's hard to believe your eyes when you first see the animated action-figure versions of *Welcome to Marwen* stars Steve Carell, Janelle Monáe, Gwendoline Christie and Leslie Mann. Unless you're a gamer and then, well, you've seen this all before.

No surprise, the facial motion-capture software used in the film comes from Faceware Technologies Inc., the same company behind the lifelike mugs in scores of videogames, including *Madden NFL: 18*, *Call of Duty: WWII* and *Star Wars: Battlefront*.

Robert Zemeckis directed *Marwen*, which also makes sense. Zemeckis first freaked us out with all too lifelike animated characters in 2004's *The Polar Express*. —MW



ROYAL PRIVILEGE

Historians say that, while Scotland's Queen Mary I and England's Queen Elizabeth I had an intense relationship via letter writing, they never actually met in real life, as they do in this month's *Mary Queen of Scots*. They also claim that Mary spoke with a French accent — not a Scottish one, as in the film — having been raised in France. But what's a little artistic license when you get to dress Saoirse Ronan up as Mary, and Margot Robbie up as Liz, and then have them battle it out on screen, queen to queen?

Here are the real women of history depicted in oils, alongside their cinematic counterparts. On the left is Mary, painted by François Clouet around 1559 and on the right is a portrait of Elizabeth painted by William Scrots in 1546.

Mary Queen of Scots hits theatres December 14th. —MW





Back to the MIDDLE?

Mortal Engines may take place on a post-apocalyptic Earth, but the film's ancestors clearly hail from Middle Earth.

Based on Philip Reeve's book, the story unfolds in a world where London is now a rolling civilization on wheels that devours other, smaller, civilizations it comes across.

Shot in New Zealand, it's the directorial debut of Christian Rivers (left inset), who served in the art and special effects departments for Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* trilogies. Rivers was just 17 years old, and right out of high school, when he first met Jackson and he's been the filmmaker's go-to storyboard artist ever since.

Plus, Jackson co-wrote and produced the film and Hugo Weaving (right inset), who played Elrond in the *Lord of the Rings* and *Hobbit* films, plays villain Thaddeus Valentine. *Mortal Engines* hits theatres December 14th. —MW



TRUE COLOURS

All archival film footage of the First World War (1914-1918) is in black and white and silent, which creates a certain distance for today's viewers.

So when Britain's Imperial War Museum asked director Peter Jackson to create *They Shall Not Grow Old* with existing WWI footage, he decided to colorize the images, add appropriate sound effects and hire lip readers to make out what the soldiers were saying. Actors were then brought in to speak the lines.

In this photo you see Jackson's re-mastered footage on the left, and the original footage on the right.

They Shall Not Grow Old screens at Cineplex theatres on December 17th and 27th. Go to Cineplex.com/Events for times and locations. —IR



RHAPSODY IN BLUE

(AND PURPLE AND YELLOW AND GREEN)

If you're across the pond over the holidays ink in a nighttime visit to London's Carnaby Street, where this neon display of lyrics from Queen's epic rock tune "Bohemian Rhapsody" was installed to celebrate the release of the band's bio-pic of the same name. Feel free to sing along.

PHOTO BY JEFF SPICER/GETTY

Monster MASH-UP

Instead of moving to Toronto, L.A.

or New York to study acting, young Ottawa native Sarah Swire decided to head across the pond to Glasgow and attend the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

"My family and friends said, 'Are you crazy?' But I knew I wanted to go away and study," says Swire on the line from New York Comic Con, where she's promoting her latest movie. "When I first moved there I was so excited to feel culture shock for the first time, and I didn't feel any of it 'cause I thought, 'Oh my God, this feels like home, this is the place where my forefathers lived.'"

After graduating, Swire spent years living and working in Scotland, which explains how she ended up starring in this month's U.K. zombie musical *Anna and the Apocalypse*, which was filmed in Glasgow. Swire plays Steph, a gay teen who joins fellow schoolmates Anna (Ella Hunt), John (Malcolm Cumming) and Nick (Ben Wiggins) in battling zombie hordes.

The film plays like a mash-up of *Glee*, *Dawn of the Dead* and a teenage coming-of-age tale. Swire is also a professional choreographer, and choreographed all of the film's dance numbers. The movie was a labour of love for all involved.

"Making this film was the single greatest experience of my life," she says. "It's a project made for the right reasons. Ryan McHenry, the original writer and director of the short film, *Zombie Musical*, passed away at 27 from a rare form of cancer before he could finish this script. His last wish was that the film got made, so his best friends made it happen. There's this emotional weight to it, and there's a lot more heart in the execution of a project like this.

"I feel like I upgraded my life meeting all these wonderful people." —INGRID RANDOJA





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ALL DRESSED UP

CATE BLANCHETT

At the Rome Film Festival's screening of *The House With a Clock in Its Walls*.

PHOTO BY DANIELE VENTURELLI/GETTY

ROBERT PATTINSON

At the New York Film Festival's screening of *High Life*.

PHOTO BY JAMIE MCCARTHY/GETTY

CLAIRE FOY

At the Rome Film Festival's world premiere screening of *The Girl in the Spider's Web*.

PHOTO BY VITTORIO ZUNINO CELOTTO/GETTY



COMMON

In New York City for the world premiere of *Hunter Killer*.

PHOTO BY THEO WARGO/GETTY



MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ

At the BFI London Film Festival's premiere of *Widows*.

PHOTO BY JOHN PHILLIPS/GETTY



TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET

At the BFI London Film Festival's premiere of *Beautiful Boy*.

PHOTO BY TIM P. WHITBY/GETTY

IN THEATRES

DECEMBER 7



Ella Hunt in *Anna and the Apocalypse*

ANNA AND THE APOCALYPSE

It's *Dawn of the Dead* meets *Glee* as a group of teens — Anna (**Ella Hunt**) and her friends John (**Malcolm Cumming**), Steph (**Sarah Swire**), Nick (**Ben Wiggins**), Chris (**Christopher Leveaux**) and Lisa (**Marli Siu**) — sing, dance and fight their way through swaths of zombies that have taken over their town. **See Sarah Swire interview, page 12.**

SCHINDLER'S LIST

Twenty-five years ago this month director **Steven Spielberg** released his grand opus, the real-life story of Oskar Schindler (**Liam Neeson**), a German businessman who saved more than a thousand Jews from the Holocaust by employing them in his munitions factory. Re-released for the anniversary, *Schindler's List* remains an unsparing and emotionally wrenching masterpiece, a film that chronicles humanity's cruelty and its valour.

DECEMBER 14

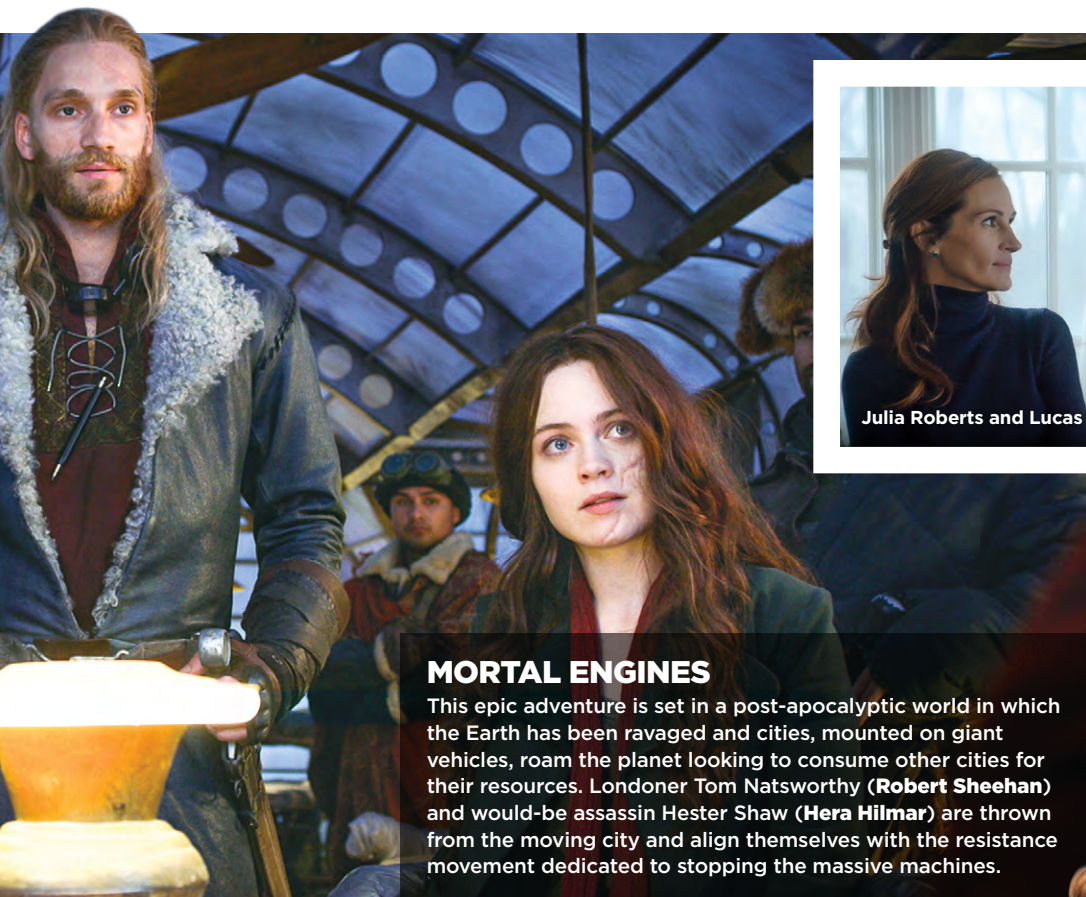


Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse

SPIDER-MAN: INTO THE SPIDER-VERSE

While we patiently wait for *Spider-Man: Far From Home*, starring **Tom Holland**, to hit theatres next year, we get our Spidey fix with this animated tale in which alternative universes collide and various “Spider” heroes come together. Our main

protagonist is teenager Miles Morales (**Shameik Moore**), who encounters Spider-Man Peter Parker (**Jake Johnson**), Spider-Gwen Stacey (**Hailee Steinfeld**), Spider-Man Noir (**Nicolas Cage**) and Spider-Ham, a pig voiced by **John Mulaney**.



MORTAL ENGINES

This epic adventure is set in a post-apocalyptic world in which the Earth has been ravaged and cities, mounted on giant vehicles, roam the planet looking to consume other cities for their resources. Londoner Tom Natsworthy (**Robert Sheehan**) and would-be assassin Hester Shaw (**Hera Hilmar**) are thrown from the moving city and align themselves with the resistance movement dedicated to stopping the massive machines.



Julia Roberts and Lucas Hedges in *Ben is Back*

BEN IS BACK

Peter Hedges (*Dan in Real Life*) directs his son **Lucas Hedges** in this family drama that casts Lucas as troubled Ben, who leaves his drug rehab facility to spend Christmas with his family. Mom Holly (**Julia Roberts**) is welcoming, but when Ben's past actions put the family in danger Holly must spend 24 hours with her son to try and make things right.

CONTINUED ►

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

In a world dominated by men, two female monarchs fight for the right to rule when Mary Stuart, Queen of the Scots (**Saoirse Ronan**), goes to war with her cousin, England's Queen Elizabeth I (**Margot Robbie**). Co-starring **David Tennant**, **Guy Pearce** and **Joe Alwyn**.

THE MULE

Director **Clint Eastwood** continues to astound. At age 88, he's directed two films this year — *The Mule* and *The 15:17 to Paris* — and *The Mule* marks his return to acting as well. Eastwood portrays broke and lonely Earl Stone (based on the real-life Leo Sharp), a man in his 80s who takes a job as a drug mule for a Mexican cartel. His actions eventually attract the attention of a DEA agent (**Bradley Cooper**) looking to bust the cartel.



Saoirse Ronan as Mary Stuart in *Mary Queen of Scots*

DECEMBER 19

MARY POPPINS RETURNS

Magical nanny Mary Poppins (**Emily Blunt**) returns to help the now grown Michael Banks (**Ben Whishaw**) and his three children through a difficult time. **Lin-Manuel Miranda** portrays Jack the lamplighter, **Meryl Streep** plays Mary's cousin, Topsy, and look for 92-year-old **Dick Van Dyke** and 92-year-old **Angela Lansbury** in small roles. See interviews with **Emily Blunt** and **Lin-Manuel Miranda**, [page 52](#).



DECEMBER 21



Hailee Steinfeld and her beloved Transformer in *Bumblebee*

BUMBLEBEE

The first spinoff from the *Transformers* franchise is set in 1987 and finds 18-year-old Charlie (**Hailee Steinfeld**) restoring a beat-up yellow Volkswagen Beetle that suddenly comes to life. She names him Bumblebee and learns all about Autobots, Decepticons, and that the government is hunting her new friend. See *Bumblebee* feature, [page 40](#).

SECOND ACT

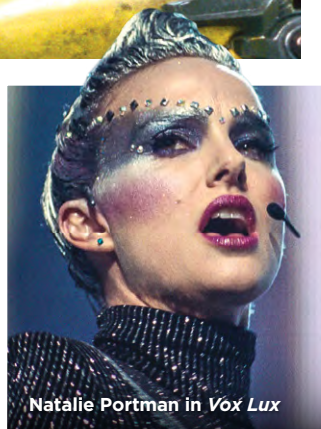
Jennifer Lopez makes a welcome return to big-screen comedies playing big-box store employee Maya, who wants to change her life. When friends create a fake Facebook page that makes her seem like an accomplished businesswoman, Maya lands a job at a top-notch New York corporation where she must rely on her street smarts to stay employed. See **Jennifer Lopez** interview, [page 46](#).

AQUAMAN

We take a deep dive into the origins of buff, tattooed superhero Aquaman (**Jason Momoa**), who was born Arthur Curry to a human lighthouse keeper (**Temuera Morrison**) and Atlantis's Queen Atlanna (**Nicole Kidman**). Raised on the surface, Arthur reconnects with his watery roots when queen-in-waiting Mera (**Amber Heard**) calls on him to help stop the nasty Orm (**Patrick Wilson**) from assembling an aquatic army. See *Aquaman* feature, [page 34](#).

WELCOME TO MARWEN

The real-life tale of **Mark Hogancamp** serves as the basis for director **Robert Zemeckis'** latest that combines live-action and cutting-edge visual effects. After being brutally attacked by a gang of neo-Nazis, Hogancamp (**Steve Carell**) finds solace in creating an intricate world populated by dolls in which he envisions himself as a World War II American soldier fighting the Nazis. Co-starring **Leslie Mann**, **Janelle Monáe** and **Merritt Wever**.



Natalie Portman in *Vox Lux*

VOX LUX

Teenage Celeste (**Raffey Cassidy**) survives a school shooting and becomes a huge pop star. However, the adult Celeste (**Natalie Portman**) is a psychologically damaged woman struggling with her past and the burden of being a celebrity. See **Natalie Portman** interview, [page 36](#).

CONTINUED ▶



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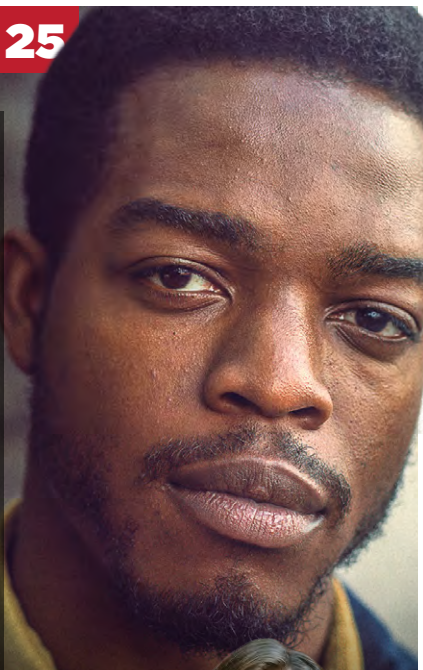
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IF BEALE STREET COULD TALK

Canadian actor **Stephan James** stars in writer/director **Barry Jenkins'** (*Moonlight*) adaptation of the **James Baldwin** novel. James plays African-American Fonny, who's incarcerated for a crime he didn't commit as his fiancée Tish (**Kiki Layne**) desperately tries to prove his innocence. See **Stephan James** interview, **page 48**.



VICE

Director **Adam McKay** (*The Big Short*) is great at bringing the funny to serious topics. Here he chronicles the rise of former American Vice President Dick Cheney, played by an unrecognizable **Christian Bale**, whose political manipulations give him unprecedented power inside the George W. Bush White House. Look for **Sam Rockwell** as Bush, **Amy Adams** as Cheney's wife, Lynne, and **Steve Carell** as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. See **Christian Bale** interview, **page 42**.



Felicity Jones in *On the Basis of Sex*

HOLMES & WATSON

Will Ferrell and **John C. Reilly**, who honed their comedic chemistry in *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby* and *Step Brothers*, are back for a third go 'round with their spoof of a Sherlock Holmes mystery. Ferrell portrays Holmes, Reilly plays Watson, and together the dim-witted duo must discover who is threatening the life of Queen Victoria (**Pam Ferris**). Look for **Ralph Fiennes** as evil genius Moriarty, **Rebecca Hall** as Dr. Grace Hart and **Hugh Laurie** as Sherlock's brother, Mycroft.

ON THE BASIS OF SEX

We know **Ruth Bader Ginsburg** as the 85-year-old U.S. Supreme Court Justice and pop-culture phenomenon, but it's time we also get to know the younger, driven woman with the brilliant legal mind. **Felicity Jones** portrays Ginsburg who, with the support of her husband Martin (**Armie Hammer**), attends Harvard Law School, becomes a women's rights advocate and argues a multitude of gender equality cases that ultimately lead to significant legal advances for women.

CINEPLEX EVENTS

FAMILY FAVOURITES

Elf
SAT., DEC. 1
Polar Express 3D
SAT., DEC. 8
CBeebies Christmas Show: Thumbelina
SAT., DEC. 15;
SAT., DEC. 22

ANIME

Pokémon the Movie: The Power of Us
SAT., DEC. 1
Love Live! Concert
SAT., DEC. 15

MET OPERA

The Magic Flute (Mozart)
ENCORES: SAT., DEC. 1;
MON., DEC. 3; WED., DEC. 5;
SUN., DEC. 16
La Traviata (Verdi)
LIVE: SAT., DEC. 15

BOLSHOI BALLET

Don Quixote
SUN., DEC. 2; SAT., DEC. 8
The Nutcracker
LIVE: SUN., DEC. 23
ENCORE: MON., DEC. 24

NFL SUNDAY NIGHTS FOOTBALL @VIP

Vikings vs. Patriots
(ONTARIO AND EAST)
SUN., DEC. 2
49ers vs. Seahawks
(MANITOBA AND WEST)
SUN., DEC. 2
Steelers vs. Raiders
SUN., DEC. 9
Patriots vs. Steelers
(ONTARIO AND EAST)
SUN., DEC. 16
Seahawks vs. 49ers
(MANITOBA AND WEST)
SUN., DEC. 16

IN THE GALLERY

Klimt & Schiele - Eros and Psyche
MON., DEC. 3
Degas: Passion for Perfection
SUN., DEC. 2; THURS.,
DEC. 6; WED., DEC. 12;
FRI., DEC. 14; MON., DEC. 17

FOR MORE INFO, GO TO CINEPLEX.COM/EVENTS

Water Lilies by Monet - The Magic of Water and Light
WED., DEC. 5; SUN.,
DEC. 9; THURS., DEC. 13;
SUN., DEC. 16

NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE

Antony and Cleopatra
LIVE: THURS., DEC. 6
The Madness of George III
THURS., DEC. 20 &
SAT., DEC. 22

SENSORY FRIENDLY SCREENING

Ralph Breaks the Internet
SAT., DEC. 8

LONDON WEST END

The King and I
SAT., DEC. 8
The Importance of Being Earnest
SUN., DEC. 9

EVENTS IN VIP

Die Hard
MON., DEC. 10

PASSPORT TO THE WORLD

Madagascar: Smiley Island
MON., DEC. 10

TIMEPLAY TRIVIA NIGHTS

FRI., DEC. 14

CLASSIC FILMS

White Christmas
FRI., DEC. 14
It's a Wonderful Life
SUN., DEC. 16;
MON., DEC. 17;
WED., DEC. 19; FRI., DEC. 21;
MON., DEC. 24

DOCUMENTARY

They Shall Not Grow Old
MON., DEC. 17;
THURS., DEC. 27

CONCERT FILMS

Andre Rieu 2019 New Year's Concert From Sydney
MON., DEC. 31

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STEVE CARELL
WELCOME TO
MARWEN

DECEMBER 21

Holiday GIFT GUIDE

OKAY, YOU CAN START YOUR SHOPPING NOW. HERE ARE 25 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY VERY HAPPY

HOST GIFTS



Help your host brighten up this year's party, and parties to come, with the **Indigo Design Studio's Adirondack Chair LED Ornament** (\$14.50, Indigo).

Does your friend have a doggie? This **Merry & Bright Holiday Long Legs Llama Dog Toy** (\$13, PetSmart) will keep that pup entertained while the rest of you party.



For the host who asks you over for fruitcake *and* to watch the game, **NHL Mason Mugs** (\$30 for two, Walmart) make a great gift.



Quash your fear of awkward silence by bringing **Vertellis** (\$40, amazon.ca), the game that promotes conversation by asking provocative questions, to the get together.

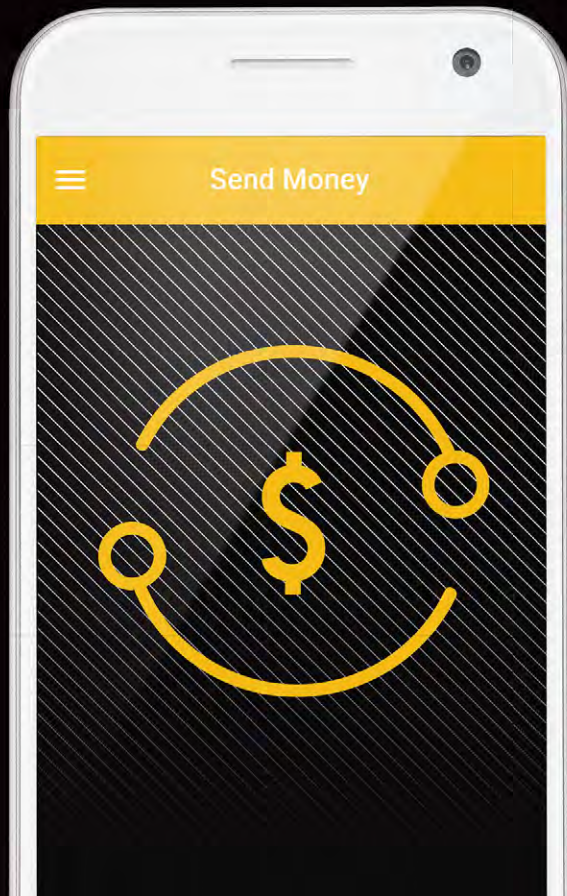


Buy your movie-loving pal a **Cineplex Holiday Gift Bundle** (\$50, in theatres or at cineplex.com) and in addition to the \$50 gift card they'll get a heap of bonuses, including one free admission, regular popcorn and a premium upgrade!



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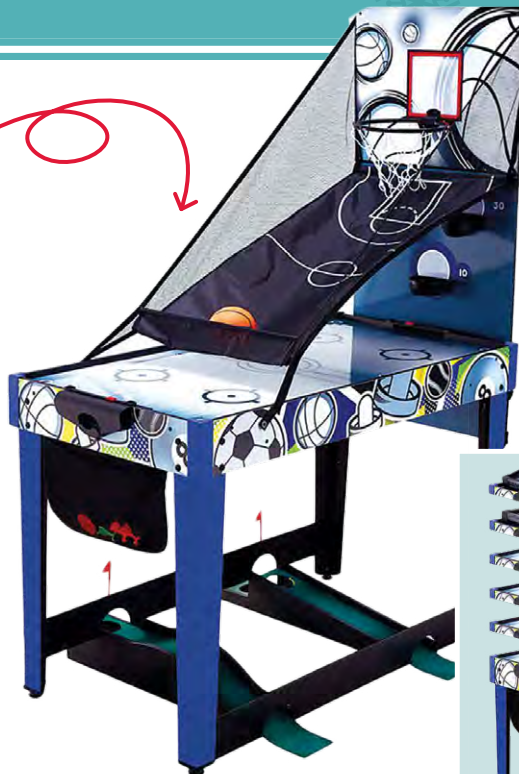
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KIDS' STUFF

How many games can you pack into one set? Thirteen! That's how many ways there are to play with the **Medal Sports 48-Inch 13-in-1 Combo Game Table** (\$150, walmart.ca).

Warning: Dozing inside this **Unicorn Sleeping Bag** (\$60, HomeSense) may inspire dreams of castles and fairy tales.

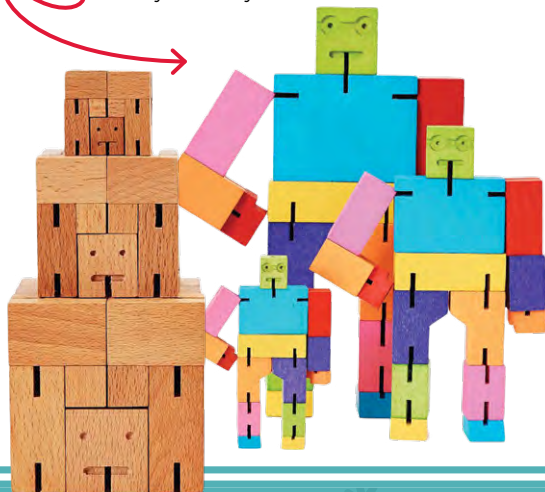


A little sweet. A little soft. **The Softy Backback** (\$28, dansunjardin.com) has a Princess Jujube shampoo and shower gel packed inside an adorable plush backpack.



Nintendo Labo (\$90 to \$100, toy stores) is a line of DIY kits designed to work with Nintendo Switch (sold separately) by incorporating cardboard constructions you assemble yourself.

We put the **Areaware Cubebot** (\$15 to \$40, shop.agakhanmuseum.org) in the kids' section but, truth is, we think folding and unfolding the bot would be a great stress reliever at the end of anyone's day.



EMILY BLUNT LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA BEN WHISHAW EMILY MORTIMER JULIE WALTERS DICK VAN DYKE ANGELA LANSBURY WITH COLIN FIRTH AND MERYL STREEP

Disney
MARY
POPPINS
RETURNS

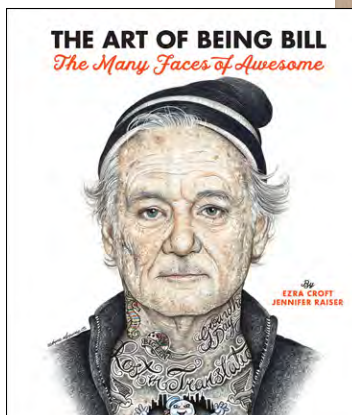


DISNEY PRESENTS "MARY POPPINS RETURNS" A LUCAMAR/MARC PLATT PRODUCTION A ROB MARSHALL FILM EMILY BLUNT LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA BEN WHISHAW EMILY MORTIMER JULIE WALTERS
WITH COLIN FIRTH AND MERYL STREEP EXECUTIVE PRODUCER MIKE HIGHAM MUSIC SUPERVISORS MIKE HIGHAM AND PAUL GEMIGNANI SONGS BY MARC SHAIMAN AND SCOTT WITTMAN MUSIC BY MARC SHAIMAN COSTUME DESIGNER SANDY POWELL
EDITED BY WYATT SMITH, ACE PRODUCTION DESIGNER JOHN MYHRE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DION BEEBE, ACS, CSC EXECUTIVE PRODUCER CALLUM McDOUGALL PRODUCED BY JOHN DeLUCA, p.g.a. ROB MARSHALL, p.g.a. MARC PLATT, p.g.a. BASED UPON THE "MARY POPPINS" STORIES BY PL TRAVERS
SCREENPLAY BY DAVID MAGEE & ROB MARSHALL & JOHN DeLUCA IN THEATRES DECEMBER 19 SCREENPLAY BY DAVID MAGEE DIRECTED BY ROB MARSHALL
UNRATED BY WALT DISNEY STUDIOS MOTION PICTURES ©2018 DISNEY ENTERPRISES, INC.

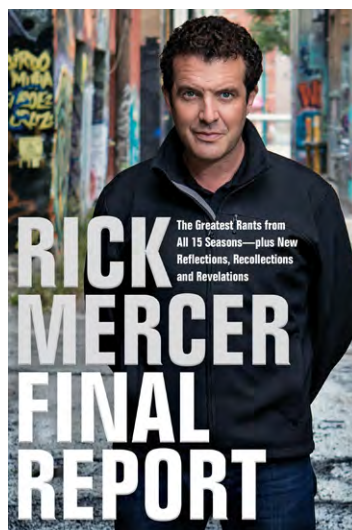
BOOK SHELF



If you're interested in eating, drinking, decorating and dressing like proud Southerner Reese Witherspoon (she was born in Louisiana and raised in Tennessee), **Whiskey in a Teacup** (\$45, book stores) has some advice.



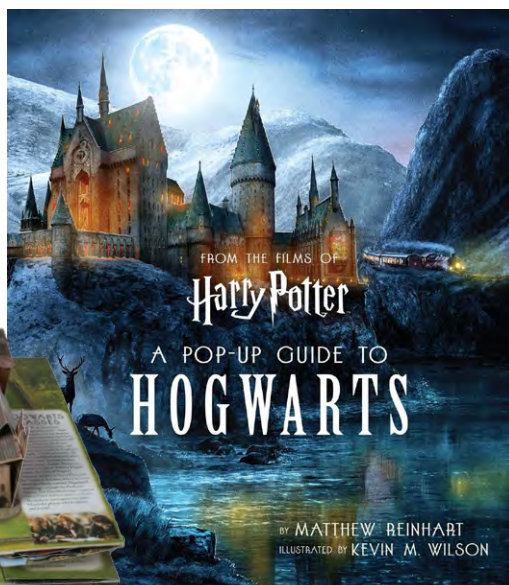
If there's one book that deserves to be under every tree, it is **The Art of Being Bill: The Many Faces of Awesome** (\$33, book stores), a compendium of fine art inspired by Mr. Murray, including the cover by Wayne Maguire and the piece above by Andrea Hooge.



The Rick Mercer Report may have ended its TV run, but you can re-read many of Mercer's best rants, preferably out loud, looking at yourself in the mirror, with **Rick Mercer Final Report** (\$32, book stores).



Hogwarts is back, not just in **Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald**, but also with **A Pop-Up Guide to Hogwarts** (\$102, book stores).



Forget Bieber and Baldwin. Nick Offerman and Megan Mullally explain how celebrity coupledness is really done in **The Greatest Love Story Ever Told** (\$35, book stores).

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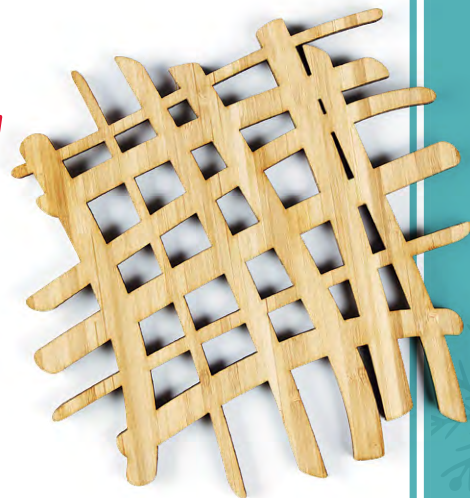
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HOME STYLE



Yes, it's a little pricey, but **Lelit's Bianca Espresso Machine** (\$3,295, edika.com) is practically a work of art!



It's not a hashtag. It's the **Scribble Trivet** (\$40, ago.ca/shop), laser cut from three-ply bamboo and made in Toronto by artisan Ali Harrison.

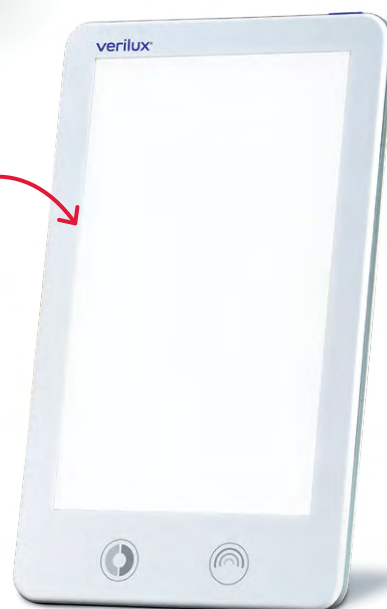


Bring a little quirk to any living room with **Amped & Co's Lightbulb Lamp** (\$80, ampedandco.ca).

Is it a puzzle? A craft? A work of art? Canadian company **Low Poly Crafts** makes **DIY Kits** (\$30 each, lowpolycrafts.com) so you can create your own modern sculpture.



You know your friend will be happy with this gift because happiness is built right into the **HappyLight Touch** (\$99, costco.ca). Verilux's light therapy lamp claims to deliver increased energy, mood, focus and better sleep.



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Fleece lining? Check. Oversized faux-fur pom-pom? Check. Made in Canada? Check. Heat your head with this **Classic Beanie** (\$75, [kyiky.com](#)), available in a range of colours.



Got a yogi on your list? Make their life easier with **Lolë's Lily Bag** (\$150, [lollelife.com](#)), which converts from a tote to a backpack and has a handy compartment to carry a yoga mat.



Winter camping? Good for you! Keep your tootsies toasty around your campsite with a pair of **MEC Hut Booties** (\$59, [mec.ca](#)).



Got a little one who's mostly nice, but a little bit naughty? A sparkly skull detail gives an edge to the **Nununu Tutu Du Monde Layered Skirt** (\$128, [nununuworld.com](#)).



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7 THINGS WE LEARNED ABOUT AQUAMAN AT COMIC-CON

Director **James Wan** and his stars held a panel discussion at this year's Comic-Con in which they revealed a few tantalizing facts about the making of the latest DC Comics film, **Aquaman**. The eye-candy superhero pic takes us to the underwater lost city of Atlantis to discover the origins of half-human, half-Atlantean Arthur Curry (**Jason Momoa**) and join him on a journey that will reveal whether he's fit to be a king ■ BY MARNI WEISZ

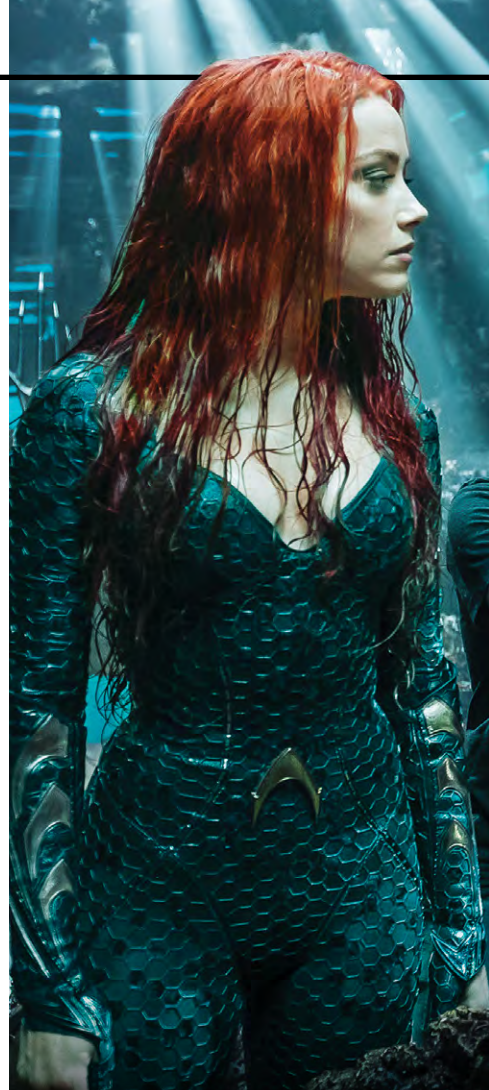


1 Director **James Wan's** desire to make *Aquaman* different from all the other superhero movies resulted in what he thinks is "more like a science-fiction fantasy film."

2 During shooting, **Jason Momoa**, who plays Arthur Curry/Aquaman, got a rash on his inner thigh from wearing the harness that allowed him to jump safely and suspended him in the air and water.



3 **Patrick Wilson**, who plays Orm/Ocean Master, the current king of Atlantis and Arthur's half-brother, had already worked with James Wan on the first two *Insidious* movies and the first two *Conjuring* movies. He says he knew they were in uncharted territory on *Aquaman* when the stunt double said, "I've never done this before, I've never seen this type of wire work."



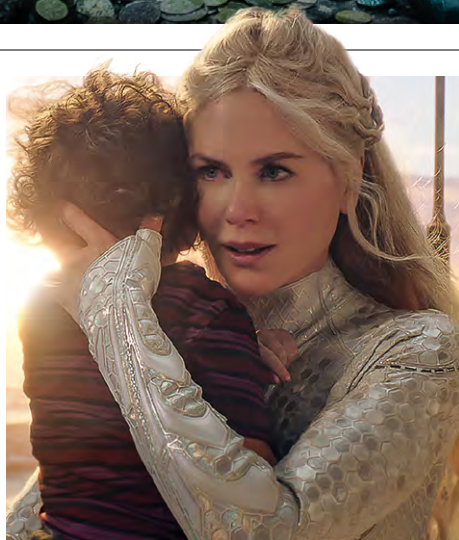
4 **Amber Heard**, who plays Aquaman's warrior-ally Mera, gets teased for always being wet in her movies, and hates being wet and cold in real life. "I would come to work, first thing in the morning, already cold, get on a freezing cold sound stage and then they built a little box, like a little cat box, and it's just a box with a floor with a grate on it and I would just stand there holding my book away from the splash and I'd be hosed down. Every morning I was a grown-ass woman here at work being hosed down in a box."



AQUAMAN
HITS THEATRES
DECEMBER 21ST



Director James Wan (centre) works with Amber Heard and Jason Momoa on the *Aquaman* set



5 Nicole Kidman, who plays Aquaman's mother Atlanna, claims she told James Wan to throw everything he had at her. "I got to lie on a rock, my opening shot in the film, being washed up on this rock and I got to lie there with massive waves crashing over me and I'm thinking, 'The bigger the better, give it to me James, that's why I'm doing this movie.'"

6 Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, who plays the villain Black Manta, couldn't swim when he got the role so taught himself during the shoot. "The first thing I did when I landed is I bought a pair of goggles, a kickboard and went down to the hotel pool and I'm like, I gotta get ready, I gotta get ready, gotta get ready." By the end he was a fine swimmer but says the kicker was, "I didn't ever have to swim."



7 In retrospect, **Jason Momoa** thinks it was a bad idea to have Aquaman wear jeans because when they were wet it was almost impossible to move. "In this one scene that you're going to see I get dropped down from the ceiling in the submarine and [James Wan is] like, 'Get lower, in this cool stance.' I'm like, 'James I'm like bottoming out right here. This is wet denim.'"

Marni Weisz is the editor of Cineplex Magazine.

PAYING THE PRICE

Natalie Portman says *Vox Lux* is about the commodification of pop culture, pushing stories that sell and how nothing matters but the clicks. She's not talking about you, of course. Oh wait a minute, maybe she is

■ BY MARNI WEISZ

The more things change, the more they stay the same. To some extent. Actor turned writer-director Brady Corbet's second film, *Vox Lux*, kicks off in 1999 with a mass shooting at a Staten Island high school that leaves many dead and wounds our teenaged protagonist Celeste (English actor Raffey Cassidy). Quick to tap into Celeste's drama, the world turns her tragedy into a gimmick and makes the sweet teen into a pop star. The film's songs were written by Australian singer/songwriter Sia.

Fast-forward 18 years and Celeste, now played by Natalie Portman, is a brittle, angry celebrity preparing for a comeback tour just as news breaks that a terrorist shooting on a beach in Croatia may have been inspired by one of her early music videos. In this second half of the movie, Cassidy plays Celeste's daughter Albertine in a clever casting twist. As an actor, Corbet has had small parts in films by cutting-edge European directors Olivier Assayas (*Clouds of Sils Maria*), Lars von Trier (*Melancholia*) and Ruben Östlund (*Force Majeure*) and the influence shows in his filmmaking.

Looking old-school glam in a tailored cream power suit, Portman — who was just 12 when she made her first movie, *Leon: The Professional* — sat down at the Toronto International Film Festival to discuss how, while school shootings have remained an unfortunate constant since 1999, much has changed in terms of our culture.

You have a unique perspective on child stars, having been one. Did you have any conversations with Brady about that?

We didn't talk about that specifically but of course I think that, one of the lines that made the biggest impact on me in the movie is when in the interview [on the day news breaks of the terrorist shooting inspired by Celeste's music video] the reporter asks, "What do you see similar between terrorists and pop stars?" And

she says, "Well, I don't know, nothing really, except that if you stop paying attention to us we wouldn't exist." And that's the same, how much attention you pay, how much the media pays attention gives us our power. One of the ideas that Brady's putting forward is, who we're paying attention to — which is now commodified, like news — how many clicks you get is how much money it is.

CONTINUED ►





Vox Lux's Natalie Portman (left) with Raffey Cassidy



► **Yeah, that's interesting.**

It's not about finding truth, it's about what story you can sell, and whether that story is about gun violence or whether that story is about a pop star's breakup, it all becomes kind of the same, and that's what we're living right now. That's the reality we're living — truth, human relationships, human experience, human suffering has a dollar value, and what happens to us? Like, what deal with the devil is that?

At one point Celeste remarks that the worse a song is, the more people will listen to it. Do you think our pop culture has been dumbed down?

I think that's there, definitely.... Everything's been devalued, everything has become so commodified that nothing matters, nothing is sacred, nobody cares about anything, which is an overstatement of course. I'm overly pessimistic. But when you do see some of these political scandals coming out, and these crazy things people are saying and doing, and it barely makes a dent it's just like, 'Oh.' When there's so much, everything becomes cheaper and less important.

This is such an American story, but stylistically the movie feels European.

Absolutely, I think it's European, but also American filmmaking from like the '70s which probably influenced European filmmaking today.... That kind of [John] Cassavetes, Nic Roeg influence. Also, I mean you can see von Trier and current European influences for sure. But [Brady] has great film culture and so it makes sense.

Celeste often wears a thick choker to cover the scar on her neck from the shooting. Did wearing that tight, constrictive thing around your neck help you get into character?

You know, actually, the biggest thing of the look that really got me into character were the nails because I feel it made me use my hands so much more and they were just always, I could always see them. But yeah all of the costumes and the hair and makeup and the nails, all of it helped me get into character. When you see yourself, and when you're feeling like people are looking at you like the character, it transforms something, always.

So not the choker specifically?

Well, the choker of course was like a constant reminder of the injury that she sustains at the beginning, so that was a key kind of emotional part that she's still at a place in her life where she doesn't want people to look at that but yet she also wears this very big piece that's a constant reminder to herself and everybody, so it's kind of two-fold.

Your husband, Benjamin Millepied, did the choreography for the big concert sequence near the end of the film. I know you practiced at home. Tell me about that.

Well, we have a dance studio at home, which is really lucky. We basically turned our garage into a dance studio a while ago, so he choreographed it and then I rehearsed it at home.... It was during the day, it would be like our son was in school and our daughter was napping and we'd go and do a couple hours work.

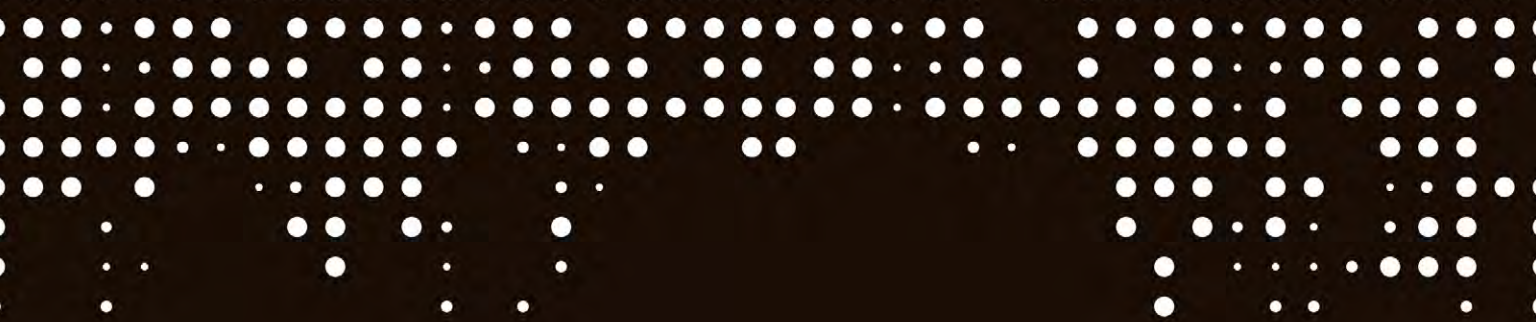
You shot chronologically. Did you watch Raffey's performance before you did your own scenes?

I didn't. We both practiced the Staten Island accent with the same dialect coach so we were aligned there by the dialect coach. Brady, it didn't really matter to him because they're really different characters. I think it's important that in the first part it feels like a completely different person and in the second part she's supposed to be 15 years later, like, ravaged by life.

Was it always the plan that Raffey Cassidy would play both the younger version of Celeste and Celeste's daughter, or did that develop after casting?

Brady told me that he was going to do that from our first conversation. It wasn't written in the script but he told me that he was doing that double casting and I thought it was kind of crazy and was questioning him about it, but I'm so impressed with how it worked out and I think that's testimony to Raffey's talent and Brady's vision combined because you really believe her as these two characters. And it has this really interesting effect of having Celeste kind of talking to herself when she's talking to her daughter, and the way that parents see themselves in their kids, but also that narcissists always feel like everyone is like them, and how do you deal with your own self-hatred when it's embodied like that in a person? ■

Marni Weisz is the editor of Cineplex Magazine.



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Ça ne prend que quelques grains pour tuer.

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BUMBLEBEE
HITS THEATRES
DECEMBER 21ST

Plan Bee

Bumblebee director **Travis Knight** explains why his Transformers may have a little more personality than you're used to

If the rusty, yellow Transformer at the centre of this month's *Bumblebee* seems like a more developed character than the Transformers we've seen in past movies, there may be a good reason.

Bumblebee was directed by Travis Knight, the CEO of the stop-motion animation studio LAIKA. Knight was also a lead animator on LAIKA's *ParaNorman*, *The Boxtrolls* and *Coraline*, and the only other film he's directed is LAIKA's *Kubo and the Two Strings*.

So when it came to directing this film, Knight approached his lead character, Bumblebee, the Transformer who changes from a Volkswagen Beetle into a loving, caring Autobot, the same way he's approached all of his animated characters.

"There is a huge component on any one of these big visual-effects films that is animation,"

Knight explained during a panel at this year's San Diego Comic-Con. "People don't think about it, they think, 'Oh, it's visual effects,' but no it's animation.

"Bumblebee is an animated character and so I approached our animators like I would approach actors because that's what they are. Bumblebee has to give a performance that's

as believable, as authentic and moving as [co-star] Hailee Steinfeld.

"So approaching it from that prism, really making it feel like an emotional creature, I do think allows the audience to attach more meaningfully to this character and hopefully forge a more emotional connection with him." —*MW*



Hailee Steinfeld with *Bumblebee*'s titular Transformer

WHO WILL CHANGE THE FUTURE?

FANTASTIC BEASTS
THE CRIMES OF
GRINDELWALD



WARNER BROS. PICTURES PRESENTS

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CASTING BY RONA WEIR COSTUME DESIGNER JAMES NEWTON HOWARD EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS COLLEEN AYKROOD PRODUCED BY MARK DAY PRODUCED BY STUART CRAGG DIRECTED BY PHILIPPE ROUSSELOTT A FILM BY DAVID YATES
SCREENPLAY BY J.K. ROWLING BASED UPON CHARACTERS CREATED BY J.K. ROWLING PRODUCED BY DAVID HEYMAN EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS STEVE KLOVES PRODUCED BY LORRAINE WACHMAN EDITOR DAVID YATES

EXPERIENCE IT IN IMAX REAL D 3D

11.16



SEE DICK RUN

Recognize this guy? It's big-screen chameleon **Christian Bale**, transformed yet again for a juicy role. This time he's playing **Vice's** former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney as he runs for office with George W. Bush and, after winning, decides to run the country, too

■ BY BOB STRAUSS

In an elevator inside L.A.'s Four Seasons Hotel, on my way to interview Christian Bale, a fat, bald and generally bizarre-looking English guy gets all chummy, like he knows me or something. "Bob! How have you been?" he chirps, cheerfully. "It's been a while. Nice to see you."

The elevator stops, we get off on the same floor and walk toward the same room. Then I look in his familiar, piercing eyes and it hits me: This is Christian Bale.

"Dude, I love this look!" I joke.

"You do?" he replies, chuckling. "Well, you know, it's all for sh-ts and giggles. Put on 40 pounds, shaved my head and plucked and bleached my eyebrows."

Bale has just finished playing Dick Cheney, Vice President of the United States during the George W. Bush administration, in Adam McKay's political biography *Vice*.

The 44-year-old Welsh actor's astonishing physical transformation will take a while to fade before he returns to the natural, handsome form he displayed as *The Dark Knight* trilogy's Batman, *American Psycho's* Patrick Bateman and other physically attractive screen roles.

"Mostly, this is us creating a canvas on which to then create the various ages of Mr. Cheney," Bale explains. "It is not like a bio-pic you've seen before. I don't know if people would even call it that. Which is why I chose to do it. I thought Adam was crazy for asking me, but then I read the script and I spoke with Adam. Then I understood and I said yes."

If *Vice* is anything like McKay's last complicated yet somehow entertaining movie — 2015's *The Big Short*, about the 2008 financial meltdown (Bale earned an Oscar nomination for playing eccentric investment whiz Michael Burry) — then it will indeed be a darkly insightful political comedy.

CONTINUED ►



Lynne Cheney (Amy Adams) accompanies Dick Cheney (Christian Bale) in *Vice*

VICE
HITS THEATRES
DECEMBER 25TH

understand him so I could convince him to spend more than 10 minutes with me, ideally spend half a day with me.

"But in that case I couldn't have notes, I had to have it all up here," he says, pointing to his brow. "He'd probably throw me curveballs and I had to know what I was doing. I finally reached that point after a great deal of research. I was so excited. I called up the production and said, 'Let's do it. Let's go! Let's contact Mr. Cheney and get a meeting.'"

"And within 10 minutes the legal team said, 'No! This could finish the film!' They weren't open to any kind of negotiation of that. So that is a regret."

While it's unlikely Cheney will appreciate everything in liberal filmmaker McKay's movie about him, Bale still hopes that all the work he put into it will impress the once-powerful yet always mysterious more-than-a-Vice-President (the film was originally called *Backseat*).

"I hope to meet him one day," Bale says of Cheney. "I may be wrong, but I suspect he would have been quite happy to talk to me. I did talk with friends of his, and they concurred. In fact, there was one occasion when I asked a guy a question about Mr. Cheney and he didn't know the answer, so he said, 'Let me get Dick on the phone right now and just ask him.'"

"Unfortunately" says Bale, "he didn't pick up." 📺

Bob Strauss lives in L.A. where he writes about movies and filmmakers.

▶ While Bale obviously has the most attention-grabbing role as the tough-minded Republican operative who many believe was a kind of evil genius secretly running the country during the Bush II years, he's backed up by a typically strong McKay supporting cast: Amy Adams as Cheney's outspoken wife Lynne, Sam Rockwell as W, *Big Short* co-star Steve Carell as Bush's Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Tyler Perry as Secretary of State Colin Powell.

All eyes will be on Bale, though, even if this is only the latest in his long line of thoroughly transformative roles. He went in the other direction and lost an alarming amount of weight to play a gaunt insomniac in *The Machinist*, won a Supporting Actor Academy Award for portraying real-life, drug-addicted ex-boxer

Dicky Eklund in *The Fighter* and adopted another intentionally unattractive, overweight look for *American Hustle*.

But Bale didn't rely on his body alone to create Dick Cheney. He also did deep research on the controversial Vice President, not merely to inform his performance, but also to impress Cheney in case he was given the chance to meet his subject before filming began.

"I learned a lot of surprising things about him from doing all that research," Bale says while, with Cheney-like cunning, being careful not to give anything away.

"Much, yes. Yes, a hell of a lot. Every single character I've ever played who was alive I've met and I spent days with. So for this, I had a goal. I said to myself I had to know enough about his life and about his policies, and

CHRISTIAN CONVERTS Our five favourite Christian Bale transformations



THE MACHINIST 2004

Bale played an insomniac industrial worker wasting away after not having slept in a year.

I'M NOT THERE 2007

Bale was actually the closest match out of the six actors who shared the role of Bob Dylan in this avant-garde bio-pic.

THE FIGHTER 2010

He lost weight again to play real-life boxer Dicky Eklund, a crack addict who trained his half-brother Micky Ward to be a champ.

AMERICAN HUSTLE 2013

In this film inspired by true events, Bale played conman Irving Rosenfeld who worked with the FBI to save his own hide.

VICE 2018

Not only did Bale transform into the grey-haired version of U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney we all know, but younger iterations too.

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GIMME A BREAK

Second Act stars **Jennifer Lopez** as an intelligent, competent, ambitious retail worker looking for the break that will propel her career to the next level. Here Lopez talks about why she could relate to her character and the most important message in her new movie ■ BY TANNER ZIPCHEN



It's probably fair to assume **Second Act** didn't find its title by accident. You may recall from your high school English class, the second act is typically where the problems arise, challenges are met, and the whole story starts to change direction.

For Jennifer Lopez's character, Maya, that's exactly what her life has become, a textbook second act. An employee at a big-box store called Value Shop, Maya works in a world where practical knowledge and street smarts are continually outweighed by a college degree and she's starting to feel consumed by unfulfilled dreams. Until, that is, some friends give her a push by getting her a job interview at a big finance firm, and, unbeknownst to Maya, embellishing her résumé and Facebook profile.

For Lopez, playing a character who wants to defy the odds and chase a dream might just be the perfect fit, or a serious case of typecasting. Either way, it was clear from the moment she sat down for this interview that this role hit close to home for Jenny from the block.



Leah Remini (left) backs pal Jennifer Lopez in **Second Act**

In this film you play Maya, who's working at Value Shop, and it's a job that she kind of can't wait to get out of.

I think she wants to be the manager of the store. It's not that she wants to get out of it; she wants to be the manager. And she's looked over because of some guy that walks in with a degree. It's not fair.

There's a really great message here about book smarts vs. street smarts.
Yeah, and experience.

Have you battled with that at all in your career?

Yeah, I think that anybody who grows up in the way that Maya grew up, which is exactly the way that I grew up, in the Bronx, in the Outer Boroughs, who doesn't have that fancy education and doesn't have the opportunities that other people have, and then being a woman, and then being Latina, all of it, you know, are little strikes against you when you walk through the door, and it's hard.

And I think for me, even entering in the industry when I did 20-something years ago, you

know everybody was very typecast and I had to kind of break those barriers and not take certain roles, and go into places for auditions and convince directors like Francis Ford Coppola that I could play the teacher, that I could play this person, or I could play that person. It's just a person. It doesn't have to be a type of person with blond hair or black hair, it doesn't matter. Just I am a person, I have the heart to do this, and I have the chops, and I have the talent, and I have the experience and please let me. And you just start banging down those doors and things start changing.

SECOND ACT
HITS THEATRES
DECEMBER 21ST



From left: *Second Act*'s Charlyne Yi, Alan Aisenberg, Jennifer Lopez and Annaleigh Ashford in business mode

And then to get the job, she has to tell a few lies on the résumé just to get in. Maybe! Just for a little bit of comic relief.

Somewhat of a “fake it till you make it” in a way? Is that something you’ve done in the past?

I think we all do that where you get in a little bit over your head at some point and you’re like uh-oh, but like you said, you find a way.

There are so many great messages in here that people can relate to. Any particular one you’re hoping sticks out?

I mean, for me it’s about her mistake, right? She feels like she made these huge mistakes and that her whole life is ruined because of it. She feels like she doesn’t deserve anything. And I think that a lot of people can relate to that, you know? You make a mistake and you think, ‘Why should I have anything good in my life?’

And the truth is that those mistakes sometimes lead you exactly where you’re supposed to be, to where you’re supposed to learn, to get you to your actual real happy place, and I love that about this movie. I feel that people need to see that right now.

Your character takes a turn and ends up in a different place by the end of the film. Where do you think you would be if you hadn’t become a performer?

Umm, I don’t know. I would like to think that I could do anything I put my mind to. But I don’t know [laughing].

No plans to be a teacher or anything like that?

Nope! No, sir. ☑

Tanner Zipchen is the host of the Cineplex Pre-Show.



Stephan James and Kiki Layne
in *If Beale Street Could Talk*



TORONTO TO HARLEM

Do you know **Stephan James**? You should. The Canadian actor is earning all sorts of intriguing, important roles on the big and small screen, like Fonny Hunt in this month's Harlem-set drama *If Beale Street Could Talk*, the much-anticipated follow-up to *Moonlight* from director Barry Jenkins ■ BY MARNI WEISZ

First he played civil rights activist John Lewis in 2014's *Selma*, a key member of Martin Luther King Jr.'s team in the 1960s, who, now a U.S. Congressman, has returned to the spotlight as a strong voice challenging the current U.S. administration.

Then he played track star Jesse Owens in 2016's *Race*, the African-American athlete who defied Hitler to win four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

And now he's playing Fonny Hunt, the wrongly imprisoned Black man at the centre of *If Beale Street Could Talk*, based on the 1970s Harlem-set novel by seminal African-American writer James Baldwin. It's a story that's as relevant today as when Baldwin penned it in 1974.

For a Canadian kid from the Toronto suburb of Scarborough, Stephan James sure is building an impressive career playing key figures of the Black experience in America.

"I don't think that these stories are particularly American. They're actually quite universal," says James over the phone from Philadelphia where he's shooting his next movie, the thriller *17 Bridges* opposite Chadwick Boseman. It's the middle of the afternoon but the 24-year-old is groggy, having just woken up. He's in the middle of night shoots and is supposed to be sleeping.

"The subject matter that we deal with is subject matter that people across the world have to deal with, even though it's a story set in America," he continues. "And as an artist you don't feel that displaced from some of these issues. Especially myself, being that I spend probably just as much time in America as Canada, if not more so, these realities are in fact my realities."

If anything, he says, being Canadian gives him an interesting perspective. "Being on the outside looking in if you will, being able to be objective about a lot of things."

Aside from being based on a novel by James Baldwin, *Beale Street* is also important for being director Barry Jenkins' follow-up to *Moonlight*. That 2016 film told the story of a gay inner-city child's journey into manhood, and won the Oscar for Best Picture.

As he did with *Moonlight*, Jenkins takes his time with *Beale Street*, allowing the story of Fonny and Tish (KiKi Layne) to unroll slowly, as their childhood friendship grows into a love affair that proves unbreakable even as Fonny is accused of a rape he didn't commit and is sent to jail leaving Tish, pregnant with his child, to fight for his release. Regina King plays Tish's mom, Colman Domingo is her dad and Michael Beach is Fonny's father, all of whom try to navigate the legal system and save their kids in their own ways.

The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival this CONTINUED ►

► past September to overwhelmingly positive reviews before screening at Harlem's Apollo Theatre during the New York Film Festival ahead of its theatrical release this month.

"The prospect of working with Barry was something very, very intriguing," says James, who spends a lot of time in L.A. but still calls Toronto home. "But I mean it's James Baldwin, so what a marriage, if you will, the marriage of James Baldwin and Barry Jenkins, and to be able to have a story like *If Beale Street Could Talk*. All of those things put together sort of sealed it for me, it was just a situation that was too good to not want to be a part of."

Though, unlike John Lewis and Jesse Owens, Fonny is a fictitious character, James looked to an all too real story when shaping his performance. "For me, my biggest point of reference was probably Kalief Browder," he says, "a young man who a few years ago was put in prison for a small crime that he didn't commit and he was sentenced to three years, two and a half of which he spent in solitary confinement."

In 2010, at age 16, Browder was accused of stealing a backpack containing a camera, \$700 in cash and an iPod Touch and spent three years in New York's notorious Rikers Island prison. But James is wrong about one thing. Technically, Browder wasn't "sentenced" to three years because he never even had a trial. Still, he spent three years in Rikers before his case was eventually dismissed because the key witness left the U.S., a detail that echoes Fonny's case in *Beale Street*.

After his release, suffering from depression, Browder committed suicide.



James in front of Harlem's Apollo Theatre

"Though it happened in 2012, 2013, and you know *Beale Street* was created in the 1970s, it struck me as a little bit eerie in a way that Kalief was doing some of the same things that Fonny was doing back in the 1970s, and you realized how unfortunately relevant a story like this still is, and so he was a good point of reference for me to shape Fonny."

Another point of reference for James was that both he and his character are visual

**IF BEALE STREET
COULD TALK**
HITS THEATRES
DECEMBER 25TH

artists. Fonny is a sculptor, and James paints in his free time. The actor says he's been obsessed with painter Jean-Michel Basquiat since he was a little kid.

"I don't claim to be Basquiat in any sense of the word," he says with a laugh, "but you know for me it's really fun exploring some of the neo-expressionist art that he used to do back in the day, messing around on different canvases with acrylic paint, listening to jazz. It's fun, it's therapeutic, it's just another form of expression."

As for the title of the film, and Baldwin's book, don't look for a direct connection to this Harlem story. The real Beale Street isn't even located in New York; it's in Memphis, Tennessee. In titling his book, Baldwin was referencing composer W.C. Handy's 1916 song "Beale Street Blues," about the birthplace of that musical genre.

For James, the title of the film is about giving a voice to stories that often go untold.

"It's like if these walls could talk, if we could say all the things or show all the things that we never get to say or people never get to see what would that look like? What would that sound like? What would that feel like," he asks. "And I think that Barry Jenkins was the perfect sort of a visionary to bring the words of James Baldwin to life in that way." □

Marni Weisz is the editor of Cineplex Magazine.



Stephan James with co-star Julia Roberts in the Amazon series *Homecoming*

HE'S EVERYWHERE

This is an exciting time for Stephan James. Not only is he starring in *If Beale Street Could Talk*, Barry Jenkins' follow-up to *Moonlight*, he also has a central role opposite Julia Roberts in *Homecoming*, a twisty psychological series that premiered on Amazon last month.

"I play Walter Cruz," says James, who's no stranger to TV having appeared on numerous shows and miniseries, including a stint as Julian Williams on *Degrassi: The Next Generation*. "He's sort of this anxious, eager soldier who's ready to be acclimated back into civilian life and so he forms this relationship with his therapist Heidi, played by Julia, and he sort of uses her to help guide himself back to normalcy."

FROM THE FILMMAKERS OF
THE LORD OF THE RINGS AND THE HOBBIT



MORTAL ENGINES

DECEMBER 14

IN REAL D 3D AND IMAX

MRC

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Making *Mary*

Who would dare to step into the round-toed shoes of Julie Andrews and play Mary Poppins for a new generation? Why, it's **Emily Blunt**. Here we interview the new nanny about taking on the iconic role, and being a little bit terrified, for ***Mary Poppins Returns*** ■ BY INGRID RANDOJA

Emily Blunt was waiting for the big reveal.

The 35-year-old actor was on the phone with her *Into the Woods* director Rob Marshall, who was keeping her in suspense about a film in which he wanted her to star.

"It kind of felt like a marriage proposal from Rob Marshall," says Blunt on the line from New York. "It was such a wonderful, ceremonious phone call. He really knows how to tell a story and draw you in, and so he started speaking about this being Disney's most prized property, and he still hadn't told me the name of it. And then he finally said, 'And the project is Mary Poppins,' and I was like, 'Oh, my god!'"

The official title is *Mary Poppins Returns*, the sequel to Walt Disney's 1964 classic pic *Mary Poppins*, which starred Julie Andrews as the magical nanny who drops out of the sky to help care for children Jane and Michael Banks. Thanks to its collection of catchy

songs, memorable scenes that mixed live action with animation, and Andrews' fussy, but warm turn, the film became an instant Disney classic. So the notion of a sequel seemed absurd, verging on criminal.

But when it was revealed Emily Blunt would step into the role, well, that changed everything. With performances as varied as a harried assistant in *The Devil Wears Prada*, a military hero battling aliens in *Edge of Tomorrow*, a conflicted FBI agent fighting the drug war in *Sicario*, and her recent portrayal of a wife and mother silently holding her family together in her husband John Krasinski's directorial debut, *A Quiet Place*, Blunt has grown into one of Hollywood's most respected, versatile and liked actors.

So, *we* may have felt she was up for the job of reimagining Mary Poppins, but she wasn't so sure.

"I was instantly enthralled and instantly terrified because I knew it was such an iconic role to take on, and was played by somebody as iconic as Julie Andrews," she remembers. "But I felt safe doing it with Rob. **CONTINUED ▶**



MARY POPPINS RETURNS

HITS THEATRES DECEMBER 19TH



Emily Blunt as the enigmatic Mary Poppins
INSET: Julia Andrews as the original Mary



► We were dear friends, we had worked together, and I knew he would allow me to take a big swing, and do what I wanted to do with it, and he would support me. So it was wonderful really."

The fact that Marshall would rely on the source material, the series of books by author P.L. Travers, helped calm her nerves.

"I knew he very much wanted to stay more loyal to the books which were written during the Great Depression, a darker, more profound backdrop for hope to reappear from the skies, literally."

And in the books, Mary Poppins is a more pompous, stern and slightly unhinged character than how Andrews played her in the first film, which Blunt absolutely loved.

"I mean she is bonkers," Blunt says with a laugh, "and funny, and vain, and so enigmatic. She thinks she's better than anyone else, which she is, but I think it's a wonderful quality that she doesn't mind letting her light shine, which is refreshing. But what I discovered when I started really diving into it is, actually, I think she is the most empathetic person I've ever played because there is nothing manipulative about her generosity to the Banks family and what she allows them to rediscover. She doesn't want any gratitude, she doesn't want any thanks in return, and at the end she disappears."

"She really is such a delicious character to play."

Mary Poppins Returns is set in London during the 1930s and finds grown up Michael (Ben Whishaw) grieving the death of his wife.

His sister Jane (Emily Mortimer) is, just like their mother, consumed with social justice causes. Michael's three kids, Anabel (Pixie Davies), Georgie (Joel Dawson) and John (Nathanael Saleh) are lonely, but they do have a friend in Jack the lamplighter (Lin-Manuel Miranda).

Miranda, the multitasking writer, rapper and actor whose stellar Broadway career includes the creation of musicals *In the Heights* and the pop-culture phenomenon *Hamilton: An American Musical*, takes on his largest film role to date.

"He's so, so multitasking," notes Blunt. "I remember seeing him on set and he was listening to music while reading a book and learning his lines. He's just got that brain, that multifaceted, simultaneous approach to things, and is lovely as a person. And he's confident, which I like, he's not afraid to let his light shine either. I think it was kind of a relief for him to come into *Mary Poppins Returns* and just be an actor and not have to be everything to everybody."

Blunt calls the film a love letter to London, with Marshall and company shooting both on location around the city and creating vast sets

in order to pull off the big song and dance numbers. The biggest number, performed to the song "Trip a Little Light Fantastic," takes place in an abandoned park set that took 26 weeks to complete and features

five levels, a fountain, bridge and stunt ramps. "I mean it was just madness, just really mind blowing," says Blunt. "The scale of it was so massive with these enormous sets that they built at Shepperton Studios. And the craftsmanship of it all, it is very much paying homage to the original movie without using that many effects. Mary's parrot umbrella is not CGI. I was holding an animatronic umbrella that would wink and talk and all of it, and people are floating around on wires, they're not CG'd afterwards. I think you feel that about the film."

With the movie ready to hit screens, Blunt is waiting to see what her two daughters, four-year-old Hazel and two-year-old Violet, think of her turn as Mary Poppins. The girls are huge fans of the original film.

"We'll see, maybe they will reject my version, they are very loyal to Julie at the moment, very loyal," she says with a laugh. However, they will be able to play with one of the film's most prominent props. "I did take home one of the parrot umbrellas. Come on, I had to!" ☐

Ingrid Randoja is the deputy editor of Cineplex Magazine.

Lighting IT UP

The multitaled Lin-Manuel Miranda talks about his character in *Mary Poppins Returns*, and why he agreed to do this movie

Every magical nanny needs a sidekick. In *Mary Poppins Returns* Mary's accomplice is Jack the lamplighter, who joins Mary and the Banks children on their adventures. Actor, writer, rapper and Broadway superstar Lin-Manuel Miranda steps into the role of Jack, which mirrors the role of Bert (played by Dick Van Dyke) in the original film. We caught up with the fast-talking, 38-year-old star over the phone from his New York office where he dished about his character, working with director Rob Marshall and the power of his inner child.

What can you tell us about Jack?

He's a lamplighter. I didn't know what a lamplighter was because the lamps in New York City just kind of go on and off on their own schedule. But back in the day there were guys throughout London who turned them on and off. It's such a beautiful metaphor also for who Jack is and what he brings to this movie. Jack is someone who apprenticed to Bert from the original film so he grew up knowing the wonders that Mary Poppins brought into the world.

It seems Jack has a childlike innocence.

Right. Michael and Jane, who are grown up, have rationalized their adventures with Mary Poppins. At the start of the film they're like, 'Oh, we loved Mary Poppins, but those stories we made up about her, those weren't real.' So they've kind of forgotten, but Jack hasn't forgotten, he's super in touch with his inner child. And as someone who is doing this interview with you as I go back and forth in my office on a skateboard I can relate to being connected with your inner child — if you hear a crash that's what's going on.



Lin-Manuel Miranda (centre) lights up the screen in *Mary Poppins Returns*

Does your inner child have a help button handy?

Yes, my inner child is wearing a Bluetooth headset so I can very quickly call.

Emily Blunt describes her version of Mary as vain and enigmatic, which makes the character so much more interesting.

Yeah, there's some vanity there, she is not unfond of her appearance [laughs]. And there's nothing treacly about her. I mean, "A Spoonful of Sugar" is a good song, but it doesn't describe Mary Poppins. I think Emily really warmed to that, there's almost a touch of Gene Wilder as Willy Wonka in the dryness to the character.

Jack marks your largest film role, but before we can really get to know you as a screen actor you are moving behind the camera preparing to direct your first movie, the musical *Tick, Tick...Boom!*

As a kid I only wanted to ever do three things: act, write songs and make movies. I've now had the privilege in my life to get to do the first two. And I would like to try the third thing. And I'll be perfectly honest with you, one of the main reasons I said yes to *Mary Poppins Returns* is because I think Rob Marshall is one of the greatest musical film storytellers that we have and I wanted to watch how he makes movies.

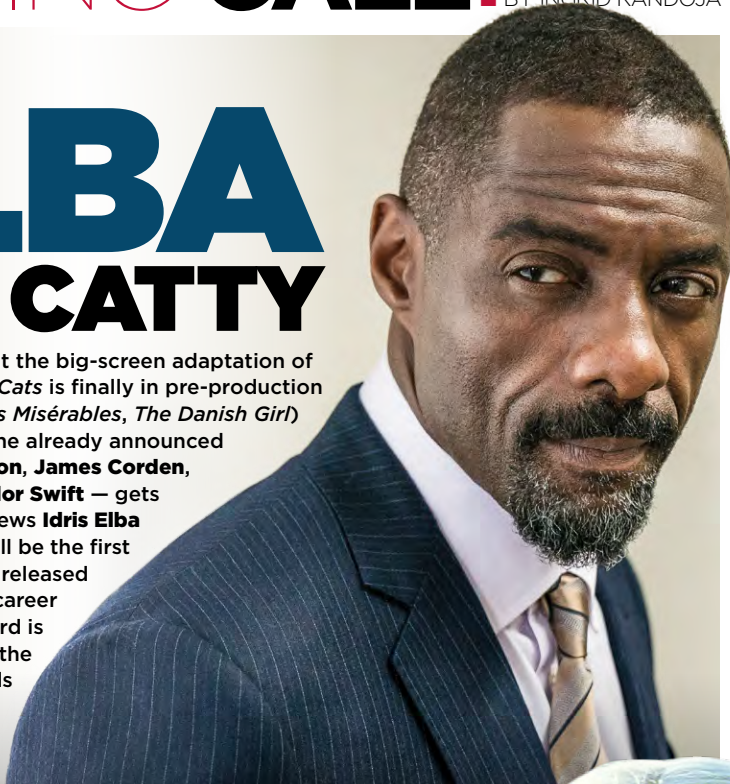
What did you learn from Rob Marshall?

I learned how meticulous he is and how much he collaborates with his associates and his choreographers. He's got four or five people on set who see the same movie in their head the way he does in his, and the way he delegates, the way he controls every part of the film frame, the way he works with children. I mean I could go on and on. It really was like being in a master class. ☑

—INGRID RANDOJA

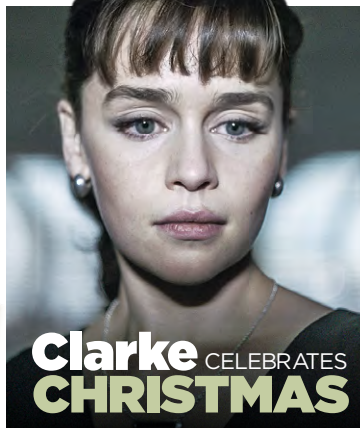
ELBA GETS CATTY

It's taken decades, but the big-screen adaptation of the Broadway smash *Cats* is finally in pre-production with **Tom Hooper** (*Les Misérables*, *The Danish Girl*) behind the camera. The already announced cast — **Jennifer Hudson**, **James Corden**, **Ian McKellen** and **Taylor Swift** — gets a new addition with news **Idris Elba** has signed on. This will be the first musical for Elba, who released an album early in his career and is a noted DJ. Word is he will play Macavity, the criminal cat. *Cats* lands in theatres December 20th, 2019.



Clarke CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS

Look for *Last Christmas*, starring **Emilia Clarke** (*Game of Thrones*) and **Henry Golding** (*Crazy Rich Asians*), to hit screens in December 2019. Directed by **Paul Feig** and co-written by **Emma Thompson**, the story is based on the 1984 Wham! pop song penned by the late **George Michael**. Michael added his two cents to the script before he died to ensure the rom-com includes its share of gay characters.



WILSON & FARMIGA Threeppeat

Patrick Wilson and **Vera Farmiga** are the First Couple of horror, having portrayed real-life paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren in *The Conjuring* and *The Conjuring 2*. They will reprise their roles in the just announced *Annabelle 3*, a film that sees the titular demonic doll, which the Warrens' have stored in their Artifacts Room, torment the couple's 10-year-old daughter (**Mckenna Grace**).



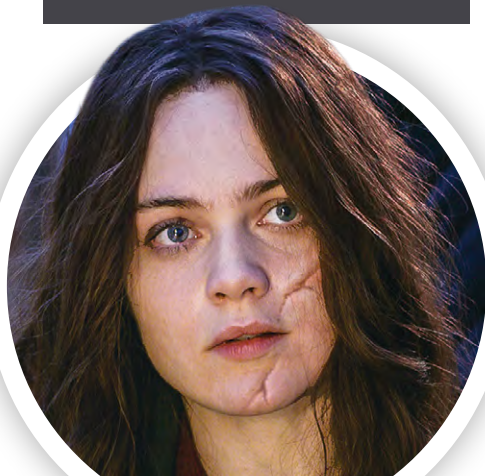
WHAT'S GOING ON WITH... **Birds of Prey**

Credit the DC Extended Universe for embracing girl power. The movie version of the DC comic *Birds of Prey*, which unites various DC superheroines, boasts a female director, **Cathy Yan**, scriptwriter, **Christina Hodson** (*Bumblebee*), and a fierce cast that includes **Margot Robbie** (Harley Quinn), **Jurnee Smollett-Bell** (Black Canary) and **Mary Elizabeth Winstead** (Huntress). The plot has the team taking on the villain Black Mask. Robbie is also producing the film, and told *Collider*, "I pitched the idea of an R-rated girl-gang film including Harley because I was like, 'Harley needs friends.'" *Birds of Prey* flies into theatres February 7th, 2020.



Rae PLAYS A PRINCESS

Issa Rae, the co-creator and star of TV's *Insecure*, has landed the starring role in the romantic comedy *American Princess*. Directed by **Stella Meghie** (*Everything, Everything*), the film finds Rae moving to London where she falls for a wealthy, upper-class man.



FRESH FACE Hera Hilmar

Producer **Peter Jackson** picked relatively unknown Icelandic actor **Hera Hilmar** to star as heroine Hester Shaw in this month's steampunk adventure *Mortal Engines*. The 29-year-old Hilmar began acting as a child in her native land before heading to England to study drama at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. Previous films include *An Ordinary Man* and *The Ottoman Lieutenant*, and you can catch her on the small screen in the new Amazon series *The Romanoffs*.



McConaughey BUYS WEED

After writer/director **Guy Ritchie** wraps his live-action *Aladdin* he'll return to familiar ground with the English crime pic *Toff Guys*. The plot finds an aristocratic English Lord and marijuana tycoon hoping to sell his lucrative business to a family of Oklahoma businessmen. **Matthew McConaughey** is set to star — we're betting he's one of the Oklahoma types — alongside **Henry Golding** and **Kate Beckinsale**. *Toff Guys* hits theatres May 24th, 2019.

ALSO IN THE WORKS ▶ **Michelle Williams** will play astronaut **Christa McAuliffe** in *The Challenger*. ▶ After a long delay, the sequel *World War Z 2* will finally start shooting in June 2019 with director **David Fincher** and star **Brad Pitt**. ▶ **Viggo Mortensen** will write, direct and star in *Falling*, a drama that explores the relationship between a son and his aging father. ▶ **Liam Neeson** portrays a career bank robber who falls for **Kate Walsh** in *Honest Thief*.



WHITE BOY RICK

BUY IT DECEMBER 11

RENT IT DECEMBER 25

First-time actor **Richie Merritt** portrays Richard "White Boy Rick" Wershe, the real-life Baltimore teenager who became an FBI informant only to be sold out by the Feds and sentenced to life in prison. **Matthew McConaughey** gives a stellar turn as Richard's blue-collar, law-breaking dad.



SMALLFOOT

BUY IT DECEMBER 4

RENT IT DECEMBER 11

It's a clash of cultures as curious yeti Migo (Channing Tatum) meets "Smallfoot" (human) documentary filmmaker Percy (James Corden). Their burgeoning friendship puts the hidden Yeti community at risk. Can Percy keep his discovery a secret?



THE HOUSE WITH A CLOCK IN ITS WALLS

BUY IT DECEMBER 4

RENT IT DECEMBER 18

This enchanting family film sees young orphan Lewis (Owen Vaccaro) move in with his eccentric Uncle Jonathan (Jack Black), a warlock whose home contains a hidden clock that has the power to end the world.



THE PREDATOR

RENT IT DECEMBER 18

The sixth film in the *Predator* series finds the braided, hunt-loving aliens doing battle with a team of misfit military personal (led by Boyd Holbrook) in a suburban setting. Writer-director Shane Black's homage to 1980s action pics includes lots of violence, gore and throwaway one-liners.

A SIMPLE FAVOR

BUY IT DECEMBER 11

RENT IT DECEMBER 18

The friendship between mommy vlogger Stephanie (Anna Kendrick) and PR executive Emily (Blake Lively) is tested when Emily goes missing and Stephanie uncovers some upsetting truths about her pal. Delicious plot twists abound.



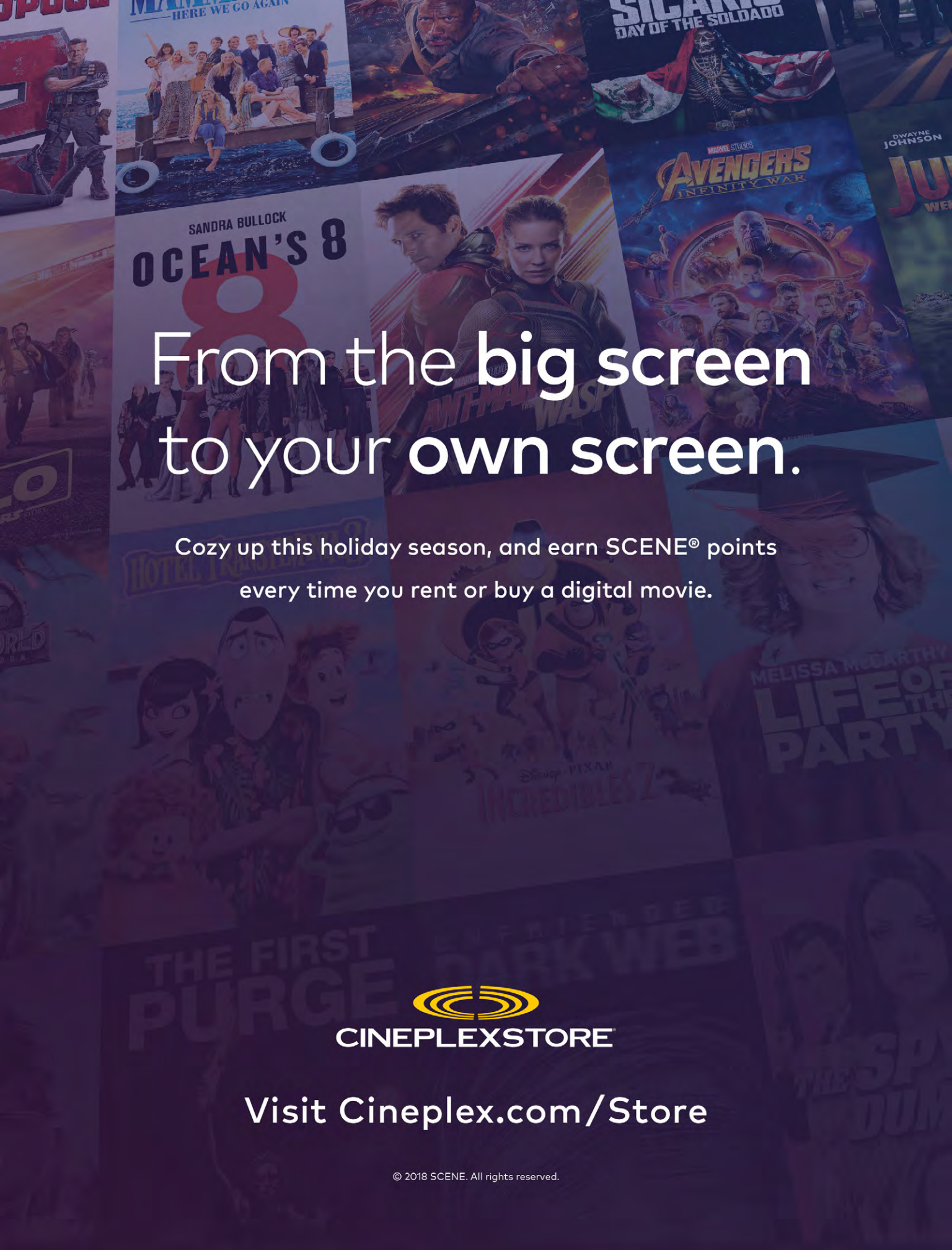
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FINALLY...

DREAMING OF A **RED** CHRISTMAS?

This 1946 photo of Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed promoting *It's a Wonderful Life* is downright precious.

But if it's evoking sentimental feelings for a movie that placed family, charity and the little guy above big business and consumerism, you might want to ask yourself if you're a Communist.

In May of 1947, just a few months after *It's a Wonderful Life* hit theatres, an FBI memo was written asserting that the film was evidence of "Communist infiltration of the motion picture industry."

Depicting Lionel Barrymore's Mr. Potter, the head of a big bank, as a "scrooge-type" made him the most hated man in the movie and discredited bankers, the memo suggested. Apparently, the film also maligned the upper class, "attempting to show the people who had money were mean and despicable characters."

Keep in mind this was the era of HUAC, the House Un-American Activities Committee, which was assembled to ferret out citizens — often those in the entertainment industry — with Communist ties.

If you dare take the risk, *It's A Wonderful Life* screens at Cineplex theatres December 16, 17, 19, 21 and 24. —MW



PHOTO BY SILVER SCREEN COLLECTION/GETTY

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